

MAKING MONEY MATTER: The Business Value of Environmental Stewardship

Taking care of the environment does indeed make good business sense.

BY KEVIN A. FLETCHER



Making money *and* caring for the environment; that can't be a real combination, can it? Yes, it can, but only when you start thinking differently about environmental stewardship.

An increasing number of golf courses recognize the business value of environmental stewardship, especially in a tight economy. People are taking voluntary steps that help the environment and save money.

MAKE YOUR GREEN BE GREEN

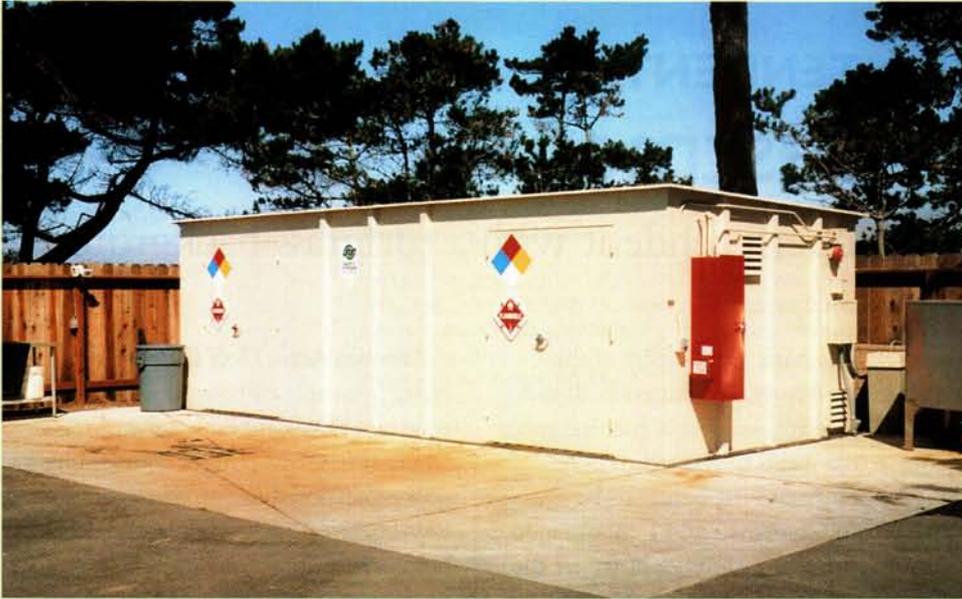
The first step is to conduct a site assessment. Find out where you're spending your financial resources. What are your greatest costs — plant protectants, energy, waste, resource selection? Once you do this, you can begin to take actions that impact your green (financial) and the earth's green (nature).

Ask yourself: What are the resources that you use? Are they all necessary, or are there ways to reduce costs while still maintaining high quality playing conditions and customer satisfaction? How can you spend your money more efficiently or more effectively?

Here are several areas where resource savings can have a significant impact on the environment and your bottom line.

ARE THERE WAYS TO BETTER MANAGE YOUR WATER USE?

Look at your entire site to find "leaky" investments. Do you pay for the water you use for irrigation? By paying atten-



What did your golf course spend last year on fertilizers and pesticides to maintain the golf course? Efficient utilization of these resources through an Integrated Pest Management program impacts the bottom line.

tion to where and how you use water, you'll save money from washing down the drain.

- Eliminate non-targeted watering to sidewalks, pathways, or ponds by ensuring that your irrigation system is designed correctly and functioning properly.
- Look for places where you can switch to half-circle irrigation heads to eliminate unnecessary water use.
- Repair leaks.
- Incorporate evapotranspiration and weather data into your irrigation schedule.
- Turn off the irrigation system when rain is anticipated.
- Consider ways to build a water capture and reuse system to store storm-water — a system of drainage pipes with a storage pond can work well.
- Look for opportunities to save water indoors. Fix leaky faucets; replace older, large-gallon toilets; and install faucet aerators for dramatic water savings.

CONSIDER YOUR ENERGY COSTS

During the 1970s energy crunch, Americans paid attention to reducing their energy use through conservation. Thirty years later, there's a mispercep-

tion that those *easy* ways to reduce energy usage have been exhausted. This is not true. The United States uses more energy than Western Europe and Central and South American combined — with 6% of the world's population, we consume 30% of the world's energy. This is not sustainable, nor is it economical.

Consider simple steps, like replacing light fixtures and worn-out electrical equipment with high-efficiency models (e.g., air conditioners, pumps). Studies have shown that investing in high-efficiency energy upgrades can be less risky, with a higher return, than investing money in the stock market — especially these days. Consider these points:

- Lighting in commercial buildings accounts for 40% of electricity costs.
- Energy-efficient lighting upgrades can reduce bills by 35% to 40% per year.
- Ninety percent of the energy of an incandescent bulb is lost in heat.

CAN YOU REDUCE CHEMICAL USE?

What was spent last year on fertilizers, pesticides, and all of the other chemical treatments needed to maintain your golf course?

According to a recent poll of golf course superintendents, nearly half of all golf courses spend more than \$100,000 per year on chemical control products, while another quarter spend between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per year. By focusing on cultural practices and Integrated Pest Management programs, many courses are dramatically reducing chemical use and thus saving money. Based on preliminary evidence from Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program golf members, it's clear that the savings can be significant — from a few thousand dollars to more than \$50,000 saved in chemical costs annually.

OTHER WAYS TO REDUCE MATERIAL USE COSTS

Consider what other materials you could be reducing, reusing, or recycling. Conduct an audit of your waste stream. Where are food wastes, office and paper wastes, construction and grounds wastes going? How might you reduce or reuse these? Do you compost and reuse it on landscaped areas? How can you operate a tighter logistics management system onsite? In the end, there are many ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle.

OTHER WAYS TO REDUCE COSTS

Ask your insurance provider if they'll reduce your rates when you reduce your chemical use risk. Many insurance providers are willing to consider the *environmental components* of any risk reduction program.

THE BOTTOM LINE

All of these steps are investments worth making. In many cases, your return on investment will easily match other projects you're considering. Whether participating in Audubon International programs or other environmental initiatives, the bottom line is to *keep the bottom line in mind*.

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